

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for their bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

While Sinclair and other broadcasters may own their transmitting facilities, they do not own the radio spectrum. The radio spectrum is a scarce commodity unlike verbal speech and the press. Any right of free expression as guaranteed by the first amendment must be tempered by the public interest. The public interest requires that all political positions be heard; that coverage not be slanted toward one point of view.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.